

U.S. Sellout at the Summit

By Richard Perle

WASHINGTON

The most poignant words spoken during the summit talks came from a nonparticipant, Lithuanian spokesman Algimantas Cekuolis.

Shortly after agreements on strategic weapons and trade were signed last Friday, he said of his beleaguered homeland: "Today we were all alone."

Unlike Mikhail Gorbachev, who won several concessions on trade and arms, the Lithuanians didn't ask for much — a sign, a gesture, an indication that, in its zeal to shore up the Soviet President, the U.S. would, half a century after refusing to recognize the Soviet incorporation of Lithuania, remain true to its belief in democracy and self-determination.

The Administration relegated its concern for Lithuania to sotto voce murmurings amid the pomp of a largely symbolic occasion, because it considers Lithuania a fly speck on the scales of the U.S.-Soviet relationship.

In pretending to manage the process of change in the Soviet Union — even as Mr. Gorbachev was busy in Washington managing his agenda at the expense of ours — a self-satisfied Administration has conjured the conceit of a "pragmatic" approach to issues of power and principle, a self-censoring refuge in which it is now comfortably entombed. No room in there for a hapless little Baltic nation.

It was a symbolic summit meeting because the agreements signed had

On arms, trade and Lithuania.

been largely negotiated beforehand. The principal U.S. concessions concerning strategic arms were made by Secretary of State James Baker in Moscow a fortnight earlier.

One concession opens the way to Soviet deployment of heavy missiles that are twice as capable as the ones they replace. This will largely vitiate the 50 percent reduction in the ceiling for heavy missiles agreed to at Reykjavik in 1986. Another concession limits the range of cruise missiles in a way so favorable to the Soviets that it was resisted by administrations for nearly 20 years.

In his rush to sign an agreement on strategic arms, President Bush set aside, at least temporarily, two important demands: that Soviet "Backfire" bombers be included in the treaty and that Soviet heavy-missile tests be limited to two a year, presumably to encumber the development of yet another generation of new heavy missiles.

Like the statement on Start, the trade agreement signed in the White House had been negotiated before Mr. Gorbachev touched down in Washington. For now, it too has only symbolic value, since the Soviets have not yet met the test of the Jackson-Vanik amendment. That law conditions the concessions the treaty promises — most-favored-nation status and access to Government credits — on

movement toward free emigration.

Yet, Mr. Gorbachev's implied threat to curtail emigration to Israel in deference to Arab objections again raised the issue of the reliability and permanence of any assurances on emigration that might be given to allow the trade agreement to go forward.

There is one issue on which the Administration deserves favorable mention. Mr. Bush, with the steadfast backing of Secretary Baker, wisely rejected Mr. Gorbachev's demand that a unified Germany should change its status within NATO to something less than full membership. A neutralized, non-nuclear Germany would imperil the stability of post-cold war Europe without in any way enhancing Soviet security.

The cold war may be over, but the two Presidents will still take the measure of each other as they contemplate future policies. Mr. Gorbachev saw a President eager to keep him in power and willing to make concessions to do so.

What he heard from the White House was an unidentified (but almost certainly authorized) adviser derisively critical of Boris Yeltsin, the newly elected, reform-minded president of the Russian republic. In fact, Mr. Yeltsin is far more tractable on Lithuania, bolder on economic reform and more amenable to the American agenda than the Soviet leader. What Mr. Gorbachev read in the statements he signed was American political and economic largesse that is more likely to whet than satisfy an ambitious appetite.

In a summit meeting of symbols, where the measure of the men who made it may have been its only significant product, the plaintive cry of a lone Lithuanian rings still.

Richard Perle was Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan Administration.

6/6/90